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### Suffrage-Related Materials

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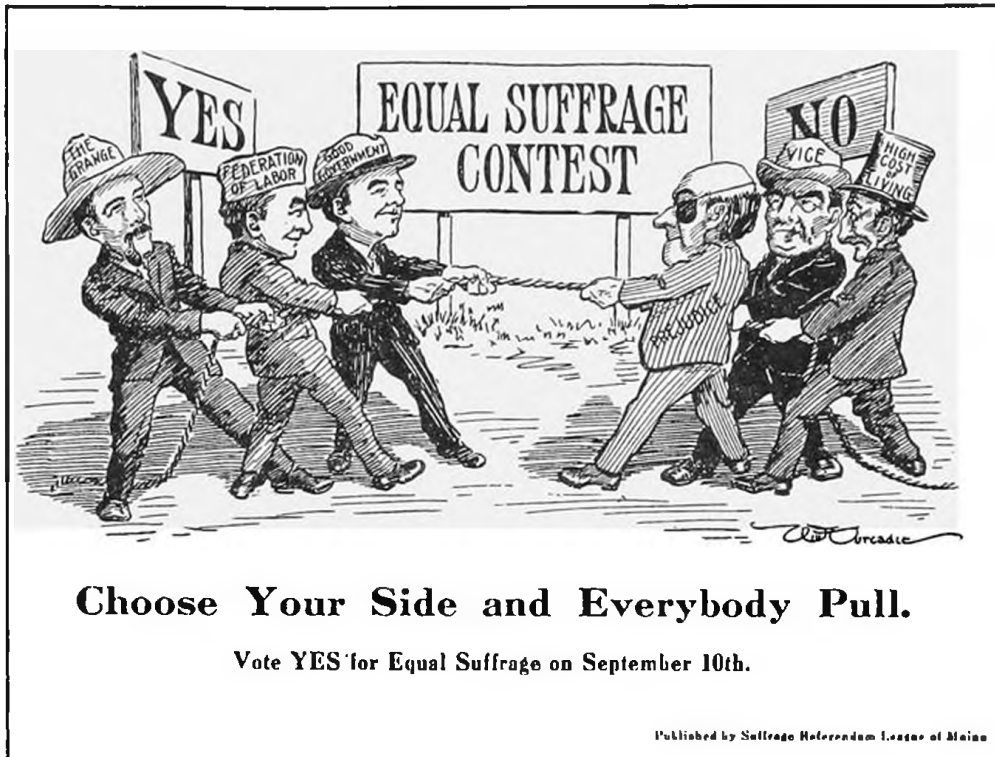
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FROM THE COLLECTIONS  
*SUFFRAGE-RELATED MATERIALS*

The history of the national movement for suffrage is well documented, but we know little about attempts to secure the vote for women in our own state. Three collections at MHS hold important material on the suffrage movement in Maine and its ties to the national efforts. Scores of men and women were involved on both sides of the issue. Perhaps the pinnacle of the debate in Maine came with a state referendum in September 1917. Both the pro- and anti-suffrage organizations campaigned vehemently over the divisive issue, and though the vote was close, the measure was defeated. The state geared up for another vote in 1920, but the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in August and the state vote in September (in which women voted for the right to vote) was meaningless.

Florence Brooks Whitehouse was the president of the Suffrage Referendum League of Maine and a state representative to the National Women's Party. She worked tirelessly for the cause, writing to politicians, giving speeches, raising money, and corresponding with organizers in other states. Seven boxes of her papers from this period of her life are in the manuscript collections at MHS (Coll 1876). The materials range from drafts of speeches and letters, to news clippings and membership lists. Much of the material is from 1917, including some very exciting telegrams from the National Women's Party about demonstrations in Washington. One of the most interesting pieces is a draft of the 1917 yearly report for the S.R.L. of Maine. The report details tactics, goals, and accomplishments for the year and offers insight into the methods suffragists used to garner support.

A recently acquired gem is a list of women from Washington County who supported suffrage in 1917 (Pamphlet 2518). Printed on oversize news stock, it appears to have been a circular for a newspaper. The caption at the top reads, "To the Voters of



Washington County: We, the undersigned, women of voting age, respectfully petition you to vote in favor of Woman Suffrage at the special election September 10, 1917." Hundreds of women are listed, giving researchers clues to the numbers of women supporting the efforts of the Maine Suffrage Campaign Committee. It is an especially choice piece because it documents the support of the movement in communities of rural Maine.

Maine also had an active anti-suffrage group. One box of materials from the Maine Association Opposed to Suffrage for Women contains by-laws, membership lists, correspondence, and meeting minutes from 1914-1917 (Coll 56). The correspondence contains letters from similar organizations in other states,

#### FROM THE COLLECTIONS

including the Man-Suffrage Association Opposed to Suffrage for Women. The minutes from the first meeting mention that this was a reorganization of the group, but give no information on the earlier incarnation. The group was open to women and men, although women seem to make up the bulk of the membership.

The Maine referendum of 1917 received national attention because it was hoped that the passage of the vote in an eastern state would spur similar successes in other states. These collections contain key information on this pivotal campaign. Together they are a rich source for research into women's involvement in the political process of our state, and are essential for any study of the suffrage movement in Maine.

Stephanie Philbrick



## SLACKERS!

The women who oppose Equal Suffrage seem to think that they should not be obliged to take any part in the responsibility of government. But our government is based on the principle that "the will of the majority of the governed shall rule." So long as one-half the governed remain silent just so long will the objects and principles of our form of government be defeated; the will of the majority cannot be known.

Women, as experts on matters relating to the home—to the children—to foodstuffs—can contribute much to a government which makes laws affecting these things. It is her duty to her home, to her family and to her government to have these vital interests properly represented and every woman who is really patriotic is anxious to do her share toward making the voice that guides the government the voice of the real majority.

**Vote YES for Equal Suffrage on September 10th.**

Courtesy of The Daily Eastern Argosy.

Published by Suffrage Referendum League of Maine.